

search for a more satisfactory account of Chartism's demise. The author correctly identifies the central problem here as one of agency, i.e. how class attitudes can become translated into class consciousness and class action. Saville proposes that the key to understanding the latter is the work situation, which demands much more research before this issue can be resolved. Few would dispute the importance of work experience in shaping class consciousness, yet the very complexity of the former in mid-Victorian (or any other) society renders its translation into consciousness extremely problematic. The formulation of an alternative to a dominant social order requires an imaginative leap of a qualitatively fundamental kind, which cannot simply be "read off" from the experience of work. What historians of post-Chartist Britain must do, as subsequent generations of socialists have repeatedly tried and largely failed to do, is to re-conceptualise the significance of work in its broader social setting, and to assess the political means that were (and are) available for its social transformation. Yet the difficulty of constructing such new forms of civil society – so markedly different from the kind of state Saville so expertly analyses – testifies to the stultifying effects of imaginative and intellectual *closure* in the wake of aborted oppositional movements like Chartism. Yes, further research into changes in work experience is relevant to the question of Chartism's decline, but this must be combined with an understanding of popular perceptions of the significance of work in relation to present and future expectations and, above all, in relation to what contemporaries thought was the proper deployment and social distribution of the fruits of work. After all, the latter has been the primary objective of all states in every period of history.

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JAMES, DANIEL. *Resistance and Integration. Peronism and the Argentine Working Class, 1946-1976*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, New York, Melbourne 1988. viii, 301 pp. £ 27.50.

MUNCK, RONALDO, with Ricardo Falcón [and] Bernardo Galitelli. *Argentina: From Anarchism to Peronism. Workers, Unions and Politics, 1855-1985*. Zed Books Ltd, London, Atlantic Highlands (N.J.) 1987. x, 261 pp. £ 28.95. (Paper: £ 8.95.)

Few countries on earth are as puzzling as Argentina. Endowed by nature with abundant natural wealth, it has been mired in economic stagnation for thirty years. Possessing one of the best-educated, most sophisticated, and most skilled and homogenous populations in all of Latin America, it has experienced an alternating series of failed civilian governments and equally unsuccessful military dictatorships since 1930. Considered the leading nation in the region and on the verge of recognition as a major global force in the early twentieth century, Argentina has since then consistently failed to realize its considerable potential and, much to the chagrin of its citizens, has found itself overshadowed by neighboring Brazil and

more distant Mexico as a major player in hemisphere affairs. This general stagnation, in turn, has seen an increasing sense of frustration, anger, and pessimism replace the optimism, pride, and dynamism which previously had characterized the nation and its people.

Crucial to an understanding of the Argentine paradox is a consideration of the role of Juan Perón and Peronism in the country's recent history. Perón, who first rose to prominence thanks to a military coup in 1943, was elected president of the country in 1946. That election was largely due to the massive backing he received from the nation's working class. A career military officer with no previous political experience, Perón managed to appeal to the native-born migrants who had flocked to the capital city of Buenos Aires in the 1930s and 1940s as well as to the older workers who traced their roots to the massive European immigration of the pre-1930 years. His two administrations (1946-51; 1951-55) were marked by profound strengthening of the labor movement as a major organization and political force and the provision of concrete benefits to the nation's workers on a scale unprecedented in Argentine – and Latin American – history. Another military coup in 1955 ended the first Perón regime. Nonetheless, the continued loyalty of the working class to its exiled leader and the philosophy he represented continued to haunt subsequent governments. Finally, Perón was allowed to return to Argentina and won a sweeping victory in presidential elections in 1973. Perón died in office in 1974, succeeded by his vice-president wife, whose own term was cut short by yet another military coup in 1976. That military regime, in turn, was followed by yet another attempt at democracy in 1983. While the Peronist party lost the 1983 elections in something of an upset, their chances to recapture the presidency in 1989 are, at the moment, quite good. Peronism continues, fourteen years after its leader's death, to enjoy the solid support of the country's working class.

The two books reviewed here examine the evolution of Argentina's labor movement and its relationship to Peronism. Both represent important contributions to a greater understanding of these crucial pieces of the larger Argentine puzzle.

The volume by Munck, Falcón, and Galitelli is an ambitious attempt to chronicle the entire history of the workers' movement in Argentina, from its origins in the mid-nineteenth century up to the mid-1980s. Within that span, the authors recognize the importance and the uniqueness of Peronism and aim to explain its success in the light of the failure of Anarchism, Socialism, and Communism "to provide a successful strategy for the labor movement in Argentina". (p. 1) Their approach seeks objectivity in contrast to the many partisan accounts of the labor movement, to eschew what they consider to be simplistic explanations, notably the use of "dependency theory" to explain all aspects of labor's development, and to incorporate the techniques of the "new social history" whenever possible in contradistinction to "traditional" political and institutional accounts. The story itself is told within the larger historical context of developments in Argentina and is presented in a straightforward chronological fashion and in an "accessible" narrative style. Within the larger context, the authors propose as "The guiding thread in our historical account [. . .] the notion of workers' autonomy" by which "The working class must be seen as an autonomous social and political power which can take initiatives against capital. And capital must be seen as a social relation whereby one class imposes its mode of social organization on another." (p. 6)

Drawing on a wide range of sources, most of them secondary, the authors go far towards achieving their aims. The first chapters trace the evolution of the Argentine working class in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, underscoring the foreign-born nature of that class as the result of the massive European immigration of that period, describing the conditions under which they lived and worked, and analyzing the beginnings of labor organization and protests. During this period Anarchists, Socialists, Syndicalists, and, after 1917, Communists led these organizing efforts and competed with each other for predominance within the labor movement. The Socialist party, organized in the mid-1890s, sought to represent working-class interests in the political realm and enjoyed some relative success in this regard. But Anarchism was the dominant influence within the labor movement until about 1914 when Syndicalists gained the ascendancy. Syndicalist success resulted from establishing a good relationship with the first popularly-elected government, that of President Hipólito Yrigoyen of the middle-class Radical party (1916-22), who sought to gain working-class support through concessions to labor. That tacit alliance, however, crumbled after a major labor disturbance in early 1919, the *semana trágica*. These events, in turn, occurred within the larger context of the impact of the Russian Revolution on Argentina, an impact well-described and well-analyzed in a separate chapter.

Following some dramatic protests in the early part of the decade, the 1920s were relatively quiescent for labor and saw a general decline in organization and activity. The 1930s, however, much influenced by the effects of the Great Depression, saw some important changes in the nature of the working class, changes which had important consequences for the labor movement and the rise of Perón. First, reacting against an excessive dependence on agricultural exports, the governments of the period encouraged the rapid expansion of Argentine industry, much of it large-scale. Second, hundreds of thousands of native-born workers flocked to Greater Buenos Aires to find employment in these industries, creating a new working class. At the same time, Communists and Socialists competed for leadership of the labor movement, the former having some success with the new workers, the latter basing their support on the older, foreign-born proletariat, but neither able to develop a mass backing and their competition only serving to divide the main labor confederation when Perón appeared on the scene.

Some have explained the rise of Perón as a consequence of a charismatic leader's irrational appeal to the politically naive new workers. Munck and his collaborators, however, accept the revisionist approach which emphasizes Perón's appeal to both old and new workers and the two-way nature of this relationship; that is, labor, in following Perón, was acting in a rational and logical manner to achieve its own interests while Perón, naturally, was responding to labor's demands and needs in a way which consolidated his own power. That power and appeal, the authors note, was based not only on promises, personality, and psychology, but also on a wide range of substantial gains, including higher wages, a greatly strengthened organizational structure (albeit under strict state control), and unprecedented political power.

The concluding chapters deal with the confusing period after the fall of Perón in 1955. They are among the best sections of the book, providing a clear and coherent analysis of a very complex series of developments. In this section, too, the authors

supply a valuable focus on developments on the labor front beyond the limits of Greater Buenos Aires. On the other hand, they may also exaggerate the number of what they consider “watersheds” in these years, beginning with the first Perón presidencies (1946-55), the period including the major uprising in the interior city of Córdoba (1969-72), the second Perón presidencies (1973-76), and the electoral defeat of 1983, which, they claim, “signaled the end of the road for a certain authoritarian populist laborism”. (p. 226) The validity of that prediction will have to await the course of future events.

The penultimate chapter of this volume, “The Social History of Labour”, represents a stimulating and provocative suggestion to explore further the forces which affected the daily lives of the Argentine workers and the development of a working-class culture in that country. Using an imaginative blend of disparate sources and examining the role of community, culture, and consciousness, the authors indicate some promising areas for future research.

Although the material in this book is presented in a generally accurate manner, there are some annoying minor lapses. For example, 1930s’ secretary of agriculture and former Socialist party leader Antonio de Tomaso is identified as De Pomasso (p. 104) and a cited Communist party declaration, supposedly issued in 1941, refers to “nazi-peronism” at a time when Perón was still an obscure junior officer (p. 112). The lack of an index is also something of a drawback. These matters aside, this volume stands as the most up-to-date, comprehensive, and readable examination of Argentine labor history yet published. Scholars will find it a valuable reference and overview while general readers will welcome it as a useful and comprehensible introduction to the subject.

Daniel James’s *Resistance and Integration* concentrates specifically on the Perón period and its aftermath. His aim, like that of Munck and his collaborators, is to look at labor and Peronism within the specific historical context and to present a realistic description and analysis free from many of the myths, misperceptions, and inadequate theorizing which have plagued previous treatments of the subject. Within his narrative, he deals with two main issues: “the Peronist union hierarchy and its relationship with its rank and file, and the issue of Peronist ideology and its impact on the working class”. (p. 2)

One of the principal lessons which emerges from James’s excellent study is a greater understanding of the ambiguities, complexities, and contradictions which existed within the labor movement itself, its relationship with Perón, and its relationship with various succeeding governments. In his important initial chapter, James finds the root of these complexities in the original formation of Peronism, a movement based on “tangible benefits for the workers, the formation of a new and positive vision and role for the workers in Argentine society, and the development of a movement of political and social *opposition* [emphasis in the original] as a denial of the dominant elite’s power, symbols and values”. (p. 39) At the same time, the Peronist regime after 1946 had to consolidate and control the working class, limiting its autonomy and the scope of its actions. The tension between the labor movement as a powerful force in its own right and, in turn, its dependence on the Peronist state for the power it enjoyed, created an “ambiguous legacy” which would have lasting influence.

Subsequent chapters covering the 1955 to 1976 period examine the consequences

of this legacy. Throughout this period, the Peronist labor movement had to confront and deal with a series of generally hostile governments, both elected civilian regimes and unelected military dictatorships. These regimes sought either to co-opt or control the Peronist movement, rightly perceived as the main source of opposition to their policies. For much of this period the Peronist party, the institutionalized political expression of the movement, was prohibited from full participation in national life. This left to the Peronist unions the dual role of promoting and protecting labor's interests while also serving as the principal political apparatus of Peronism.

From 1955 to 1973 the Peronist labor movement was in a generally anomalous position. Along with the military, it was clearly one of the two main poles of political strength in the nation. Often, the Peronists could use that strength to frustrate and even bring down various governments. However, it was a dangerous game. The threat or actual use of force by labor frequently produced more repression than benefits. Furthermore, Peronist pressure on elected civilian regimes, such as those of Arturo Frondizi (1958-62) and Arturo Illia (1963-66), led to military governments which were even more anti-labor than those they replaced. At the same time, the labor movement was never strong enough on its own to seize power or, in a consistent fashion, to influence positively those who did. These anomalies, in the last analysis, led to many compromises between the Peronists and the government in these years.

Soon after Perón's ouster in 1955, a strong and aggressive, if often inchoate and leaderless, resistance movement appeared within the unions. This resistance was mostly a spontaneous opposition arising from the rank and file in protest of official social and economic measures. The resistance was generally crushed by 1960, but reappeared in different form later in the decade. At the same time, the union hierarchy gradually adopted a more pragmatic and flexible stance with regard to the various governments of the period, symbolized by the dominance of the metal workers' union leader Augusto Vandor in the 1960s. Through their control of the movement and their ability to negotiate with and influence various administrations in the 1960s, union leaders like Vandor wielded considerable power. However, as James notes, that power was also, in his recurring phrase, *ambiguous*, because in Argentina labour law "gave the state exceptional powers vis-à-vis the union movement", including government control of legal recognition of unions, collective bargaining, and internal elections. (p. 173)

Tensions between the more moderate leadership and the more militant rank and file provided the backdrop for the dramatic events of the late 1960s and early 1970s. During this period a pro-Peronist guerrilla movement emerged, major labor leaders – most notably Vandor – were assassinated, and in 1969 the principal labor protest of the postwar era took place in the interior city of Córdoba. From the "Cordobazo" appeared a new union leadership not so closely tied to Peronism and more radical in its orientation, ready to challenge the established and entrenched hierarchy of the union movement.

Complicating all of these developments was Perón himself. Although in exile, Perón exerted enormous long-distance influence over the course of his movement and sought to manipulate existing differences, disagreements, and contradictions within it to his own advantage. Despite, or perhaps because of, the turbulent history

of labor's direction after 1955, the rank and file of the movement remained unhesitatingly loyal to their exiled leader and contributed mightily to his return and re-election as president in 1973. Today, as mentioned, the Peronist party and movement still claim the loyalty of most Argentine workers. According to James, the continued vitality of Peronism after 1955 was due to the basic accomplishments of the first Perón presidencies and the continued memory of these accomplishments in the minds of the workers. For them, "Peronism did not only represent higher wages, its historical meaning for workers was embodied also in a political vision which entailed an expanded notion of the meaning of citizenship and the workers' relations with the state, and a "heretical" social component which spoke to working-class claims to greater social status, dignity within the workplace and beyond, and a denial of the elite's social and cultural pretensions." (p. 263)

A brief summary of the contents of James's book does not do full justice to the richness of detail and sophistication of analysis found therein. Much influenced by the British contributions to the new social history, he has assembled a wide range of sources, including pamphlets, leaflets, Peronist and union publications, and, most importantly, oral interviews, to provide a compelling picture of not only why the workers acted as they did but also why they thought and "felt" as they did. His narrative takes the reader onto the shop floor and out into the streets with the workers themselves, tracing their responses to changing conditions and circumstances with sensitivity and skill. He also avoids simplistic moralizing, showing, for example, the difficult situation in which the unions' leadership found itself in the post-Perón period and examining clearly and objectively the various alternatives they faced and the complex motivations behind the choices they adopted.

There is much in James's work which is fresh and original, both in terms of sources and interpretation. He has provided us with a superb, insightful account of the Peronist movement, one which will become a landmark in Argentine historical studies and in the general history of labor in Latin America. While the book is an important overview of the period, it is not for the casual reader. The level of analysis demands careful attention and a general familiarity with the political developments of the period, which are often referred to rather obliquely. Moreover, some of the specific references could stand more clarification and elaboration. A quote on page 108, for example, mentions Don Luis Colombo without identifying him as the conservative head of the *Unión Industrial Argentina*, from the 1920s to the 1940s.

In sum, the two volumes reviewed share some common characteristics and strengths. Based on impressive research, they provide a full and balanced view of the Argentine labor movement. Influenced by general theoretical literature on labor and social history, and containing numerous comparative points, they also are securely fixed within the specific Argentine historical framework. Both are clearly written, lucidly organized, and tightly argued. Both, finally, are essential reading for anyone interested in the labor movement in one of Latin America's most intriguing and most important countries.

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